

Boulle-Norman Cadet Squadron 20265
Michigan Wing Civil Air Patrol
United States Air Force Auxiliary



Element Leader's Handbook

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Introduction and Scope

This Pamphlet is intended as a supplement to both CAPR 52-10 and CAPM 20-1, with the following goals:

- (1) To more clearly define the role of the Element Leader and the Assistant Element Leader
1. To provide resources and training for Cadet NCOs
- (3) To insure that the role of Element Leader is neither neglected or ignored

What is an NCO?

What is an Element?

What is an Element Leader?

“As an element leader, you have an increased scope of supervisory responsibilities. You are responsible *for* the members of your element and also to work *with* and *through* your assistants.”

- Leadership 2000 and Beyond

“CADET ELEMENT LEADER

Responsible for the supervision and training of the cadet squad, to include:

- Satisfactory performance during formations and ceremonies.
- Military Bearing.
- Morale.

The Cadet Element leaders should be familiar with CAP directives as listed for Cadet Flight Commander.”

- CAPM 20-1, The Organization of Civil Air Patrol

Taking these two manuals, the duties of the Element Leader can be broken down into five broad categories: Following/Learning, Training, Supervising and Guiding.

1) Following/Learning.

One of the most forgotten aspects of being an element leader is that the element leaders are still followers, not just leaders. Element Leaders must learn and implement the Squadron's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)s as well as other existing policies. Element Leaders must learn “the way things are done”, and do it. *Element Leaders implement policy, they do not create policy.* Their job is to keep information flowing between their cadets and the flight sergeant. The more informed the cadet staff is the better job they can do to help the element leaders. Once the Element Leader has mastered the position, the Element Leader should begin studying the duties of the Flight Sergeant and other positions, in anticipation of advancement.

2) Training.

An effective element leader must closely supervise and train all of their cadets, so that they too can be future leaders. One of the best ways for a Cadet to learn the basics of the military environment is by on-the-spot training, and this is best done at the element level. In other words, command can teach a uniform class only once in a great while, but a good element leader can correct uniform discrepancies each and every week. The basic training areas an Element Leader is responsible for include: Uniform Wear, Customs and Courtesies, Military Bearing, and Drill.

One of the biggest responsibilities of the Element Leader is to train an assistant element leader. One day the element leader will be moved up the next step in the chain of command and it will be necessary for someone to fill the empty slot. By having another cadet already trained in what is expected of an element leader, the current element leader can help to cut the transition time down drastically. A well-trained assistant element leader can also help the Element Leader. The Element Leader can delegate tasks to the assistant, such as calling the element members to make sure they will be at the meeting.

3) Supervising.

It is rarely possible for a Flight Sergeant to know everything about every member of the flight, from how they are performing on the drill pad, to the last time they were promoted, to how they are improving in physical fitness. Instead, the Flight Sergeant trusts the Element Leader to supervise the element, take care of routine details, and pass anything out of his/her depth up the chain of command. Supervising and training overlap, in that a good supervisor can see problems and make on-the-spot corrections that have considerable training value.

The Element Leader is therefore expected to know **where** the members are, **what** they are doing, and **why** they are doing it during meetings. "Cadet Smith isn't here" is not a valid answer, "Cadet Smith will be absent tonight because his bar mitzvah is tonight" is.

4) Guiding.

Element Leaders must track cadet's progress. Knowing when their element members joined Civil Air Patrol, when their membership expires, when they've gotten promoted last and what tests they have passed will make that job easier. If Cadet Smith joined CAP six months ago and doesn't have a uniform, something is wrong. If Cadet Smith has been a C/A for the past 16 months, something is wrong. The Element Leader needs to step in and fix this type of problem before it becomes critical. *Cadets who are going nowhere inevitably go out the door, and don't come back.*

A good element leader can be like a big brother, that a Cadet Basic or Airman can come to for advice, guidance, and help, without fear of reprisal. The element leader can guide the Cadet to uniforms, promotions, prepare them for encampment, and give advice on activities and special awards.

Throughout the whole process of training new cadets, the element leader must be sure his/her cadets don't lose their will to strive for excellence. It is important for them to keep their cadets challenged, learning, and proud. The element leader must listen to his cadets and find out what their desires and plans are for Civil Air Patrol. If the element members all want to have more ES Training, the Element Leader should tell their Flight Sergeant so that he can plan more. A successful element is a happy element.

Along with all of these things presented, an element leader may be required to carry out more duties, according to their situation. Being an element leader is the key stage between flight members and flight staff. An element leader will learn many of the leadership and teaching skills required to be an effective Cadet NCO.

What an Element Leader is not *Or: Avoiding Common Mistakes and Bad Habits*

1. An Element Leader is not a Commander. *Element Leaders implement policy, they do not create policy.* Element Leaders do not punish subordinates, nor can they award decorations; instead, element leaders **recommend** corrective action or awards up the chain of command.
2. An Element Leader is not a staff member, and should not expect to attend staff meetings unless specifically invited.
3. Element Leadership is additional duty, not "special privilege." Element Leaders are expected to meet every standard and attend every class along with the members of the Element. Leading an element does not "get you out" of doing regular duty.

4. Much of the burden of the quality of the Cadet Squadron lies on the head of the element leader. If, through inaction, an element leader allows the unit to fall apart, the Element Leader is just as guilty as the Element Leader who does the job badly. Truth be told, the two are one in the same.

Element Leader's Checklist

Every Week -

- Make sure all cadets are present
- In the proper uniform
- And know about upcoming activities
- And have rides to those activities

Career -

- Are there at least 4 [Pref. 6] Cadets in the element?
- Does the EL know names and phone #'s?
- Do they all have membership cards?
- Do they all have uniforms?
- Do they wear them properly?
- Do they know the chain of command? Cadet Oath?
- Do they attend activities?
- Do they know basic drill?
- Has the EL supplied evaluations, constructive criticism, or other forms of feedback?
- Is an Assistant Element Leader being trained?
- Does the Assistant have a CAPF 2A for the position?
- Is the Cadet of the Quarter in this element?
- Do the Cadets know how to get promoted?
- Have they tested?
- Do they know how to report to a promotion board?
- Have they been promoted?
- Are they ready for encampment?
(To be honor cadet?)
- Have they attended encampment?
- Is the EL studying to become a flight sergeant?
- Does the EL know the goals of the Cadets?
(Promotions, Positions, Radio Operators Authorization, ES Qualifications, Competitions, Solo Wings, etc.)
- Has the EL helped them reach that goal?

Once all the boxes are checked, the Assistant EL should be running an element of his/her own, everyone in the element should have 2 stripes, and the EL should be preparing for the position of flight sergeant.

Where can I go to learn more?

About this document

During the summer on 1999, Lt Col John Ballard pointed out numerous times that the Cadet NCO Corps at Boulle-Norman was lacking; especially the element leaders. After a series of discussions, the reason for this was clear: The Cadet NCOs neither knew what was expected of them, nor how to do it. To rectify this situation, Capt. Matthew Heusser recommended a 'Cadet Element Leaders Handbook', and, in January of 1999, the Staff of the Squadron began what would eventually become this document. This document is intended as a 'living document', to be edited and revised by generations of Cadets to come.

Credits

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